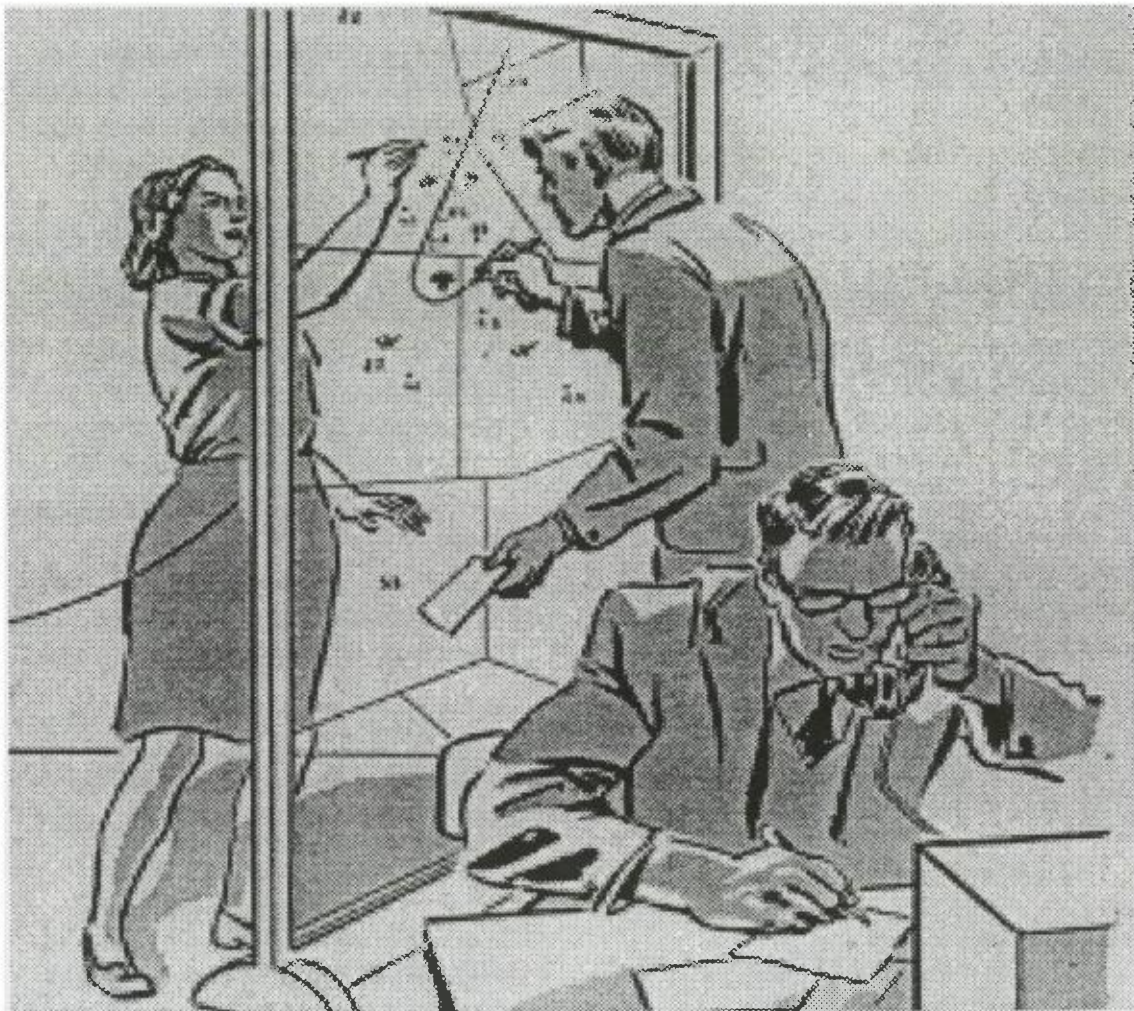


SIREN

The Newsletter of RSG

Issue 3 Autumn/Winter 1996



This issue:

PHQ HAVENPORTS

More on WB1400

Strategic Food Depots

Welcome

I hope you like the new look *Siren*. The Cold War Research Study Group, is a specialist study group, parented by Subterranea Britannica. RSG is a non-political organisation, and aims to present an objective view of the UK's infrastructure and plans used in the period 1945-1995 for National Defence.

We will not infringe knowingly on any subject matter covered by the Official Secrets Act, nor will we become involved in any wild, conspiracy type theories.

In this issue, I am happy to include an article by Steve Fox on the Strategic Food Stockpile, and an article on a restored ROC post in Cornwall. Also in this issue is a report on the first RSG field trip to Kingsway under High Holborn, London. There is more information on the WB1400 system that has now been dismantled, and two book reviews. I am grateful for the continuing feedback that you give - keep it up, and keep sending the articles. As always I welcome any articles and feedback. Please let me know YOUR thoughts and ideas.

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The Strategic Food Stockpile

This article has been submitted by Steve Fox [Thanks Steve - Ed]

It was expected that a nuclear strike would have a devastating effect on the

nation's food supply. Imports would cease, the loss of gas and electricity would curtail production, shortages of fuel and labour would disrupt distribution, the loss of fertilisers would reduce farm output and so on.

Planning in this area was the responsibility of MAFF which post-strike would transform itself into the Food and Agriculture Organisation responsible for supply food.

In the lead up to war MAFF would encourage producers to increase their output and would introduce a rationing system for tinned and other long life foods. Bulk food stocks would be moved away from ports and an increased number of buffer food depots established. The buffer depots would provide a strategic reserve of food under the control of the Regional Commissioner to feed the survivors until a more normal system of food supply could be re-established. The food would be released by the Regional Food Officers to the County Food Controllers, who would be responsible for its collection and distribution to the emergency feeding centres.

At the Heart of the system was the strategic food stockpile which was held for MAFF in the peacetime buffer depots [For a full list of these depots, see *War Plan UK* by D. Campbell - Ed] The stockpile held a very limited variety of food and was not intended to provide a balanced diet or even feed the survivors for any length of time.

The following foods were held in the 1980s:

- a) Flour - This was a special high protein, low moisture content flour which was turned over every 4-5 years.
- b) Yeast - Packed in tins with an expected life of 10 years.

- c) Sugar - Held in 56 LB sacks and turned over if it started to deteriorate.
- d) Fat - Known as "Ministry Marge" with an expected shelf life of 20 years
- e) Biscuits - Sweet Biscuits in large tins apparently baked in the 1960's.

Some glucose sweets were apparently produced, but found to be too expensive. There have been suggestions that some baby foods and convenience foods were also held, but given the general scarcity of the known stocks this seems unlikely. During the 1960s tinned meat and cake mix was held, but at its peak during the last war, the strategic stockpiles were enormous; with large amounts of frozen and tinned meat and other products including tea and "Ministry Soup".

MAFF have not released details of the quantities held, which in any event would have been augmented in the crisis period, but the Rattlesden depot [ex-WW2 Bomber airfield, and 1960's Bloodhound missile site - Ed] near Ipswich held 1433 tons of flour, 621 of sugar, 654 of fat, 120 of biscuits and 33 of yeast. MAFF says that it had 67 depots in 1995, which if Rattlesden was an average example would confirm the figure quoted in the press that the stockpile was 200 000 tons.

This sounds a lot, but considering the flour held at Rattlesden together with that held at the other 5 depots believed to have been in the 4 Home Defence region (East Anglia) it would produce some 25 million loaves for the peacetime population of 5 million. The reader can decide the efficacy of these 5 loaves, when there were no tinned fishes available. These figures, of course, assume that the loaves could be baked and distributed but also ignore the fact that they would be used to

supplement the standard "1/2 pint of stew" which would be the expected daily ration amounting to 1200 calories planned for under emergency feeding arrangements.

If used to augment other rations and if increased prior to attack, the strategic food stockpile may have been of considerable use; but when measured alongside the amount of food needed in the months of the survival period, the amount of food which would be in normal commercial hands and the stocks held during the last war, its cost-effectiveness is questionable. Was it retained perhaps, rather like the Green Goddesses by accident, or by inertia to serve a political rather than a practical purpose?

All the food stocks and buffer depots had been disposed of by the end of 1995.

© SP Fox July 96

Veryan ROC Post Museum

A charming leaflet has been sent to me by Lawrence Holmes of Malpas, Truro in Cornwall, describing the fully restored and equipped ROC post, that he and his group have opened on a limited basis to interested parties.

Lawrence has fully equipped this post with genuine equipment, as it would have been inventoried during its operational life. Veryan post was the very first Cornish aircraft reporting post to be opened in 1940. The post was set on top of Carne Beacon 1 mile inland and was designated T2 post, part of 20 Group Truro. In 1963 the post was re-sited to its present position on Nare Head and the old post was abandoned. Also at this time the underground post was built, and the Nuclear reporting role commenced. The post continued in this role until Corps Stand Down in 1991. The post

is sited on the Nare Head Cliffs on National Trust Land, within the Cornish Heritage Coastline.

Visits are free of charge to ex-ROC members, and other visitors are asked to donate a small fee to Post Museum Funds. The next time you are in this beautiful part of the world, why not try to visit?

For Further details contact Lawrence Holmes (01872) 78234.

PHQ Havenports

Just off the A120 in the port of Harwich and under Hamilton House lies the underground complex, known as Port HQ Havenports. This bunker was constructed in 1941 for the Navy and was known as *HMS Badger*. Its role was for Naval control of Merchant Shipping and to act as a control for the Naval defence of the ports and anchorage's, plus the local control of warships. It was abandoned after the war, until 1986 when it was reopened for its role as RN Port Control for local, national and NATO use. It was refurbished and had new Air-Conditioning plant installed. It was used by the Harwich unit of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS), who staffed it on a weekly basis for training and exercises: additionally several times a year it was used for National and NATO exercises. The staffing of the bunker was primarily by the RN, RNXS, RNR with additional staff from the Army, RAF, US Army, Police, Board of Trade and other organisations. The number of staff could rise to nearly 100 during a major exercise, including a continuous watch by the RN and RNXS personnel. The bunker had the same responsibilities as it had in the Second World War. The whole PHQ was commanded by a RN Captain (Retd) who was known as

Naval Office In Charge. The bunker was abandoned and handed back to its Civilian Owners on 31 March 1994. In true Naval tradition, the Bunker was equipped with a bar in the rest room!

Thanks to Dave Wood and J McBurney for the info.

Book Review

***Drakelow Unearthed* by Paul Stokes.**

Drakelow Unearthed is an excellent history of the former Rover No. 1D Shadow factory. In the words of the author, Paul Stokes " 'The Rover', RSG9 and RGHQ92 are only some of the names that have been used for the huge network of tunnels hidden deep below the woodland and sandstone of Blakeshall common near Wolverly. Shrouded in secrecy for over 50 years its secret history is finally unearthed. From its construction in 1941 to its sale in 1994, from aeroengine factory to nuclear bunker". Paul is to be congratulated on a very readable account of the site which many knew as Regional Seat of Government No.9. Packed full of interesting photos, maps and diagrams this book comes highly recommended at just £5.50 (inc. p+p).

ISBN 0-904015-40-8

Available from the author :

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RSG Underground!

As mentioned earlier, RSG visited the *Kingsway* Underground complex in London on Saturday 13th July. It was a fascinating experience, made even more atmospheric, as we were the only people in there.

During 1942 work started on a series of deep level shelters, built under existing tube stations mainly on the Northern Line. It was hoped that after the war, they could be linked to form a high speed non-stop North-South service. They were constructed as two parallel 16.5 ft bores linked by smaller connecting tunnels. One was built under the extant Chancery Lane station, 130 feet below the surface of Holborn.

During the first phase of Post War Emergency Planning in the Early 1950's the GPO took over the empty tunnels of the Chancery Lane shelter as a home for a 500 line Automatic Telephone Exchange called *Kingsway*. It was the first trunk exchange to open in the UK, and formed an important part of the Government, Military and Civil telephone & telex networks. It had links to two other underground trunk exchanges - *Anchor* under Birmingham and *Guardian* under Manchester (these were single tunnels). The idea was that these three exchanges would be able to operate and survive through any period of atomic war, keeping vital defence communications flowing, linking the fighting services, civil defence controls and the government regional war rooms which were springing up in provincial towns at this time. Remember, atomic warfare as envisaged in the early fifties (pre Soviet H-bomb) was of an order of magnitude less than what was expected just five years later; it was still planned that Britain would operate for at least two months under Nuclear Bombardment. *Kingsway* and its two duplicates would help realise these plans .

To cope with operating under attack, the complex was equipped with an artesian well, four giant diesels for light and power, plus ventilation plant. The

exchange equipment was housed in a smaller series of tunnels built by the GPO in 1951 just at the Eastern end of the Southern Bore. These tunnels are interesting as they have the legend 'GPO' cast into the steel tunnel liners. The complex also had a canteen and rest rooms located in the northern bore . It would seem that *Kingsway* came off of the secret list in the late 1960's, but various bits of GPO/BT equipment remained in place until fairly recently. The complex now is stripped of all telecommunications equipment, and is up for disposal by BT.

Our visit started with a conducted tour around the complex. It was made the more interesting by the constant rumblings of tube trains above us! What impressed me, was the sheer amount of effort that had gone into building the place which was testament to its one time importance. Our visit concluded with a brief lecture on "*Emergency Planning: Beyond War Plan UK*" by Steve Fox - this lecture will be reproduced in the next issue of *Siren*.

Book Review

***Dark Sun* by Richard Rhodes**

This is a magnificent book subtitled *The making of the Hydrogen Bomb* and follows Rhodes' first prize winning volume *The making of the Atomic Bomb*.

In *Dark Sun*, Rhodes writes extensively about the huge Soviet espionage effort, starting in 1941 to acquire US atomic secrets, and how Stalin's grotesque henchman, Beria, personally supervised the work leading to the detonation of *Joe-1* - the first Soviet Nuclear device- in 1949. Read about the theoretical and practical work that lead to the US and then the Soviet Union, developing

the 'Super'; from Tellers' first embryonic ideas to the devastating weapon of our Nightmares. The final, most chilling Chapter - *Scorpions in a Bottle* describes how General Curtis LeMay - head of the USAF SAC was actively trying to engineer a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets over the Cuban Missile Crisis.

This 731 page book is a brilliant blend of history, science and politics - full of unexpected and often hair raising revelations from previously undisclosed Russian and US sources.

Thoroughly recommended, and at £9.99 a bargain. Just the thing for a Christmas present to read through the long winter nights.

Dark Sun by Richard Rhodes,
published by Simon & Schuster

ISBN 0-684-81690-3

Missile Defence of US Cities

I found a fascinating article on the World Wide Web regarding the missile defence of US cities. The *Nike-Ajax* was the first ground based supersonic anti-aircraft missile system to become operational in the US. The Nike missiles were deployed at sites in a circular pattern around key American Industrial and Military locations.

The first Los Angeles area *Nike -Ajax* battery was emplaced in the Mountains above Malibu in 1954. By 1958 there were 16 *Nike-Ajax* launch sites guarding the greater LA area, protecting an area of some 4 000 square miles. *Nike* Missiles were launched from a self-contained launch area. Each site was equipped with two or three launching platforms each with an underground storage magazines, an elevator and four missile erectors. The missiles were stored underground on

rails and were brought to the surface by an elevator. Once on the surface, they were pushed on rails to an erector and with the proper electrical and hydraulic connections completed, raised to an angle of about 85 degrees for firing at hostile aircraft. It was sent steering signals from a ground based computer which resolved the firing solution from tracking radar's.

The newer, more powerful *Nike-Hercules* missiles replaced the *Nike-Ajax* during the period 1958-63. The new missiles were installed into Modified *Nike -Ajax* sites in the LA area. Only 9 of the Original 16 sites were converted to fire the *Nike-Hercules*. All sites were decommissioned from early 1974, leaving LA ringed with these surplus sites.

This is interesting as the UK had a parallel Anti-Aircraft Missile system deployed from the mid '50s called *Bloodhound*. This was deployed along Eastern England, mainly to protect the V-Bomber and *Thor* IRBM Bases. It was hoped that it could be deployed to protect important installations such as ports and eventually deployed around the 16 major cities in the UK. Alas the Mk1 system was found to be too short ranged and vulnerable to ECM. It was dismantled by 1965. The Mk2 *Bloodhound* had a much improved range and was vastly more countermeasures resistant. It remained deployed until the early 90's at selected sites in East Anglia. Many of the Mk1 sites were on disused wartime airfields, and the remains of the launch pads are still visible today.

More on WB1400

In the last issue of *Siren*, there was a brief report on the demise of the WB1400 warning network. Since the

dismantling of the system, more information on it has become available. [Apologies for the technical nature of this article! -Ed]

The system was based on the BT Network, around 254 centrally controlled geographic areas composed of a Carrier Control Point (CCP), a Control Point Exchange (CPE) and a number of Distribution Exchanges (DE). There was one CCP per CCA. Usually located in a Main Police station and it controlled all the Receiver Points situated within that CCA.

The CCP was connected to the CPE by two private circuits. The CPE exchange transmits the WB1400 signal from the CCP to all the DE within that CCA. It also took the Attack Warning from the National 'Handel' system which was normally used to carry the speaking clock. At the Distribution Exchange the WB1400 signal was disseminated to all the Receiver Points local to that DE. Each Receiver Point was furnished with the small Speaker Unit. These were at ROC posts, hospitals, fire stations, military bases, and in rural areas village Police stations, pubs and private premises. Power operated sirens (usually in urban areas) were controlled by special units (Receiver, Signalling).

On receipt of the Attack Warning from the *Handel* network, the police operator at the CCP would broadcast the Attack Warning to all Receiver Points in the CCA. The operator at the CCP would also operate all the power operated sirens from the CCP. At the Receiver Point the operator would sound the alarm locally. When fallout was expected, the police operator would be warned via a dedicated private wire from the local ROC Group HQ. The police operator could then broadcast warnings to the affected districts via a speech message. At the

Receiver Point the operator would again sound the local warning (Maroons). Using this system, the whole country could be covered by a warning system quickly and cheaply.

As stated in the earlier article (*Siren* Issue 2), with the end of the Cold War and the event of modern building standards, double glazing and high levels of ambient noise, the Home Office decided that the system was no longer viable, and the whole network was dismantled this year.

RSG Needs You!

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of *Siren*. Remember, it needs YOUR input to make it successful. I always welcome articles and feedback.

To receive *Siren* on a regular basis (I try to produce at least 3 per year), join Subterranea Britannica - cost £12 (- £5 unwaged, +£3 for profit making organisations +£1 overseas). Membership and general information on Society can be obtained from the Joint Secretaries:

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